

Ethical Conduct of Science Case Study #2

You recently finished your PhD in Dr. Patel's lab, but are staying on for a while as a post-doctoral research associate before beginning a post-doctoral fellowship in another lab. Dr. Patel returns from an international meeting very excited about starting some new work related to your dissertation project, but wishes to collaborate with Dr. Chin. At a meeting of you, Dr. Patel, Dr. Chin, and a graduate student in Dr. Chin's lab, Dr. Patel describes the question she wishes to investigate and asks if this can be done. You are the most knowledgeable person in the room about the topic, and reply, "Yes, of course, it can," and proceed to outline 2 lines of research exploring the topic. Both are technically difficult experiments, but to someone familiar with the literature in this area, the experiments that you outline are fairly obvious. It is agreed at the meeting that you will pursue the line of research that can be done in a much shorter time. The graduate student in Dr. Chin's lab will work on the other line of research. You complete your basic lab work, and realize that you are unable to detect anything that will either disprove or support the hypothesis due to insurmountable technical difficulties. You've helped the graduate student in Dr. Chin's lab occasionally, but not much. The other set of experiments seem to be working out very nicely at the time that you leave the Patel lab. A year passes and you run into the graduate student at a large national meeting where you've made arrangements to meet with Dr. Patel and Dr. Chin for dinner tomorrow night. During the course of your conversation with the graduate student, you learn that the experiments all worked out beautifully and everything is ready for publication. In fact, they plan on putting the manuscript in the mail the day after they get back from this meeting. You've never received a copy of the manuscript or an author's permission form to sign, causing you to suspect that you are not listed as an author on this paper. Is this a problem? If so, what should you do?

Assignment & Assessment

I have divided the class into groups of 5-6 students on the Courseinfo web site. I'd like for each group to get together today in lab. Make sure that all of you can find your group web page, and can use the needed features of the group pages. Between now and November 29, I would like you to apply the information about authorship of scientific papers learned in case #1 to this scenario. Additionally, feel free to investigate further the criteria of authorship and responsible conduct of research that might be applied to this particular situation.

1. Use the threaded discussion or chat features of the group pages to discuss this case as a group. Each student is required to post at list twice.
2. Anonymous posting on the discussion board and anonymous chatting will be available as long as the privilege is not abused. Please remember, I cannot tell who has posted anonymously; therefore, I cannot count anonymous postings as applying to your required postings. Remember that anytime you send out a group email, I'll get a copy also.
3. Your group needs to submit to me a one page, written report of your option or options for the best course of action including a rationale for that course or courses of actions. Identify the number of students agreeing with majority/minority options. State clearly if there is a consensus opinion. Your grade will depend on participation by group members in the threaded discussions and chats, and on providing one or more rational courses of actions with a reasonable rationale for why you think that is the best course of action.
4. Your paper is due in the electronic drop-box by November 29. Be sure to include the names of all students participating in the report on your paper. If you have difficulty with a student participating due to excessive absences or lack of communication with group members, please keep me informed by email, and include that information as a note on your final report. You should only include as authors of your final report those who honestly contribute.